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PRISMATIC SANDSTONE FROM MISSOURI.¹

On the right bank of the St. Francois River, in S. 31; T. 33, N.; R. 6 E., about 200 yards south-west of the St. Louis Granite Company's quarry, near Knob Lick, in Madison County, Mo., is a little sandstone ridge, trending north-west and south-east, nearly 200 yards long, 10 yards wide, and not more than 8 to 10 feet high above the nearly level ground on either side. The country rock here is the Cambrian sandstone, which overlies the granite, as is beautifully illustrated at the quarry near by. This little ridge is interesting on account of the peculiar form of the sandstone composing it. In places where the soil has been somewhat worn away, instead of revealing flat layers of sandstone, as can be found near by in any direction, the surface is covered with fragments of sandstone of a prismatic form, resembling in shape the basaltic columns so well known in different parts of the world. In size the prisms range from about three-fourths of an inch to one and a half inches in diameter, and from three to eight inches in length. They are not uniform in geometrical outline, some having four sides, some five, and a few six. Quite often two and occasionally three prisms adhere together, side by side, but generally so loosely that they can easily be broken apart. In such cases the boundary between them is usually a single plane, but sometimes two new planes are exposed by the breaking, forming a re entrant angle on one prism. Fig. 1 fairly represents a combination of two of these prisms.

The nature of the rock was studied quite carefully, both macroscopically and microscopically, and it was found to be nothing but an ordinary, somewhat irregularly indurated, fine-grained sandstone. The grains of quartz are water-worn, as is usual. The induration is produced by the interstitial spaces being more or less filled with silica, but the thin sections examined showed no instance of secondary growth of the quartz crystals.

¹ Published by consent of the State Geologist of the Geological Survey of Missouri. Read before the Iowa Academy of Sciences, Des Moines, Dec. 30, 1891.

The existence of the ridge is probably due to the induration of the sandstone. Why this limited area should be thus indurated, and the surrounding country should not be, there seemed to be no obtainable evidence. However, this of itself is of little importance. But the prismatic form of the sandstone is much more interesting. The specimens gathered were on or near the surface, and were not seen *in situ*; but from their great abundance it must be argued that they extend downwards for a considerable distance. It was first thought that possibly a dike rock had once existed here, which had assumed the prismatic character, and that in some way by surface decay it had left moulds into which the sand had been carried. But a careful examination revealed no indication whatever of there ever having been a dike here, although they are quite common in the surrounding country. The granite close by is older² than the sandstone, and could not therefore have played any part in the matter by metamorphosing the sandstone in any way.

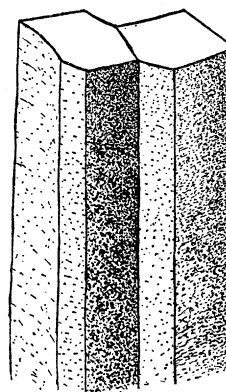


FIG. 1.

If any of the readers of *Science* know of any other occurrence similar to this, or can suggest any cause likely to have produced this peculiar formation, it is hoped they will give the information through the columns of *Science*.

ERASMUS HAWORTH.

Oskaloosa, Iowa.

ORTHOGRAPHY OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES.

In 1885 the Council of the Royal Geographical Society, impressed with the necessity of endeavoring to reduce the confusion existing in British maps with regard to the spelling of geographical names, in consequence of the variety of systems of orthography used by travellers and others to represent the sound of native place-names in different parts of the world, formally adopted the general principle which had been long used by many, and the recognition of which had been steadily gaining ground, viz., that in writing geographical native names vowels should have their Italian significance and consonants that which they have in the English language. This broad principle required elucidation in its details, and a system based upon it was consequently drawn up with the intention of representing the principal syllabic sounds.

It will be evident to all who consider the subject that to ensure a fairly correct pronunciation of geographical names by an English-speaking person an arbitrary system of orthography is a necessity. It is hardly too much to say that in the English language every possible combination of letters has more than one possible pronunciation. A strange

² See Bull. No. 5, Mo. Geol. Surv., p. 12, et seq.